THE IMPERIAL ASSURANCE OFFICE COMPETITION.

We mentioned some time ago, that certain architects and *others*, had been invited to submit plans for a new building for the purposes of this company, on a site adjoining the Hall of Commerce in Threadneedle-street, City. Eight designs were, we believe, submitted; and Mr. John Shaw being called in to assist the directors in the selection, the first premium was awarded to Mr. Gibson, and the second to Mr. Christian.

PREMIUMS FOR INVENTIONS AND DESIGNS.

The council of the Society of Arts offer the following premiums, amongst many others: —

1. A prize of ten guineas, with the Society's medal, for the effective ventilation of private rooms or buildings designed for large assemblies.

2. *The same* — for an improved method of preventing the emission of noxious vapours from the gratings of sewers, which shall permit a free passage of the sewerage, and provide against bursting the drains.

3. *The same*—for a specimen of printing in distemper by blocks, so as to "keep register" more perfectly, and produce finer specimens of art in paper-hangings, than by the ordinary methods.

4. *The same* — for the best application of glass in the construction of roofs.

The same—for the invention and application of a cheaper kind of glass than any now in use.

5. A prize of five guineas, with the Society's medal, for the best original pattern of a paper-hanging for an ordinary sitting-room, to be printed with not exceeding four blocks. The design to be full size.

The same—for an ornamental design, of a geometrical character, suitable for a roller window blind.

6. The Society's gold medal—for the finest specimens of Irish marble suitable for decorative purposes.

They also offer their gold and silver medals for original designs in architecture, and of architectural ornaments or details, and drawings of existing buildings, including geometrical elevations.

New Book.

Old England's Worthies; a Gallery of Portraits from authentic sources. Cox, King-William-street, Strand.

The twelfth number of this very cheap book, published on the 1st of the present month, completes the work. It contains in the whole 72 portraits of eminent statesmen, lawyers, warriors, men of science, and artists; with twelve illustrative engravings in colour, and well-written biographies, with head-pieces. It makes a handsome as well as interesting volume, well deserving of a large circulation. It was originally published by Mr. Knight, but by a recent arrangement has passed into the hands of Mr. Cox.

Projected Works.—There are advertisements in the current newspapers, for contract-tenders for building an extensive carriage bazaar and coach manufactory at Southampton; razing and rebuilding a house at Gravesend; constructing two reservoirs, part of an aqueduct and branches, and other works of the Bristol Water Works; repairing roads in Staffordshire; and (175 miles) in Herefordshire; rebuilding and repairing 5 bridges in Haddingtonshire; also, for the whole railway works, in separate divisions, of 5 and 6 miles, of Bristol and South Wales Junction; 5 and 11 miles of Oxford, Worcester, &c.; 5, 6, and 13 miles of South Wales; 2, 7, 1, and 4 miles of Monmouth and Hereford; 20 miles of Newcastle and Berwick (Kelso), in two divisions; 6 miles of Edinburgh and Bathgate, in two divisions; 19 miles of South Eastern; 2nd and 3rd contract of Rugby and Stamford; portion of Fleetwood and Preston Junction, and widening Preston and Longridge at Fulwood; also, for widening 600 yards of Greenwich, and enlarging London Station; building and finishing stations at Monkwearmouth and Newcastle; 5,700 square yards platform, and 10,000 super. yards roofing, at Leeds Station; and for 2,000 coal waggons with wooden bodies, for Midland Railway, &c.

Correspondence.

THE BUILDINGS ACT "CONVENIENCES,"—THE DALSTON COMPETITION.

Sir,—"An Old Architect" complains, in his letter in your number for this week, of the want of urinals in our streets. I beg to say, that I think the Official Referees have endeavoured to remedy this evil: I mean by the interpretation they have lately put on the portion of the Act relating to projections from the fronts of houses, as it is quite clear that, if their decision on this point is to be abided by, whenever one person building wishes for cornices or other projections, and sets back his front from the general line of building to obtain them (which he will have to do, supposing his neighbours value the space more than appearance), a corner will be obtained, which will be extensively used for the purposes alluded to.

While addressing you, allow me to mention that, like your correspondent "Alpha," I applied for the particulars issued by the committee for the Dalston Literary Institution, but, unlike him, I did not send in, as I was quite convinced that what they were asking for could not possibly be done for the money proposed to be expended.—I am, Sir, &c.

Jan. 8, 1847. G. R. W.

ELECTRIC TELEGRAPH.

Sir,—Your correspondent, A. D., has directed your attention to an ambiguous sentence, which has accidentally crept into the account of the electric telegraph, given in the "Engineers and Contractors' Pocket Book." As it was the intention of the writer of that little article to convey correct ideas on the subject of electro telegraphy, so it is now his wish to remove any misapprehension which may have been caused by an unguarded expression.

The passage in question would have been more correctly worded, had it stood thus:—"If he *move* half round *the needle*, so as to present his back to it," &c. In this case, no wrong conclusion could have been formed. All that was intended by the introduction of this passage was, the explanation of the fact, that the position of the wire, whether above or below the needle, and the reversal of the electric current, would have equal influence in determining the side to which the needle would be deflected.—I am, Sir, &c.

London, Jan. 12, 1847. E. C. P. B.

TO OPEN CARRIAGE GATES.

Sir,—I should be glad if some of your numerous correspondents will inform me, as to the best and cheapest method of opening a large carriage gate (made of wood) from a lodge, without coming out of it. I have thought of several methods, but none seem to be quite the thing I could wish.

I am, Sir, &c., Henricus.

The Wood Trade.—Churchill and Co., in their annual circular, just issued, say the trade in wood for 1846, after much vacillation during the spring and summer, has closed in an improved and healthy state, with ample evidence that the consumption of the United Kingdom continues on the high scale of 1846—which had far exceeded all previous years. They estimate the comparative annual importation and consumption as follows:—

Importation of wood to the United Kingdom For the years....	1843.	1844.	1845.	1846.
In loads	1,373,288	1,558,612	2,054,526	2,041,000
Entered for home consumption in the same years.	1,365,025	1,543,000	2,009,731	1,958,000

It appears that the colonial wood trade is not curtailed by the abatement of protective duty, but, on the contrary, is progressively increasing. The quantity of square timber of all kinds brought down to the port of Quebec during 1846, is found to exceed all former periods, amounting

In 1846 to 37,404,409 cubic feet
" 1845 " 27,749,994 "
" 1844 " 27,850,891 "

Monument to Sir Charles Morgan.—A considerable number of designs were submitted to the committee in competition; from these they selected a model by Mr. Evan Thomas, of London. It consists of a sitting figure of the baronet, on a tasteful pedestal, the sides of which are decorated with agricultural emblems in high relief.

Miscellanea.

Public Cooking Ovens for the Working Classes.—We derive the following description from a recent Austrian publication. "Public cooking ovens have been established amongst the Jewish community at Prague for years past: this sect of religionists deserve the credit of everywhere maintaining their own poor. The construction and working of these ovens is the following:—They are common baking ovens, of round or oblong form, as best suits the locality. Their external wall, however, is furnished with a number of mural shelves and niches, the use of which shall be presently explained. They are heated and open to the public at a very early hour, when (at Prague, at least) the working people go to their work. Hither, therefore, they bring their meals, either for breakfast, but most usually dinner or supper, after the work of day has been performed. The cook receives their dishes, and places on them a label, whose utility is particular, and must be briefly explained. The people bringing their meals for preparation, may have them returned at any reasonable hour; some even wait for them. But suppose a person brings a dish early in the morning, which he does not want but at night, then the cook places in it one of the many tin labels at hand, on which all hours of day and night (with their fourth divisions) are inscribed. Thus, a person wanting his meal at a quarter past nine P.M., a label to that effect is placed on the vessel. The charge is from one to four farthings per dish, according to size and trouble required. If the person does not call at the appointed hour, the meals are kept warm in the above shelves."

Norfolk and Norwich Archæological Society.—The annual general meeting of this society was held at the Museum, Norwich, on Thursday last. The Venerable Archdeacon Collyer was unanimously called to the chair. —The Reverend R. Hart read a paper descriptive of the wood carvings exhibited by Mr. Back. They had been brought from Belgium some time ago, and Mr. Hart read several descriptions of similar carvings in some of the continental churches, in order to identify the position they had occupied, and the purposes for which they had been intended. He was of opinion that they had been used as ornaments to the pulpits. He could not assign a later date to them than the end of the 17th century. Four of the carvings represented an angel, lion, lamb, and eagle, typical of the four Evangelists. Others represented St. Ambrose, with his symbol, a bee; St. Jerome, with a lion; St. Augustine, with a burning heart, and St. Gregory the Great with a triple crown and a dove; St. Dorothy, bearing the flowers of Paradise; the Empress Helena, with the true cross; St. Dominic the founder of the order of preaching friars; and a monk, bearing the sacred monogram, supposed to be Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the order of Jesuits. In conclusion, the rev. gentleman pointed out the value of a knowledge of symbols, by the aid of which antiquaries were enabled to ascertain the subjects of these ancient carvings. Various other communications were read.

Railway Works.—The Eastern Counties Railway Company are about very large works at Stratford, comprising almost a new town. We learn that no fewer than 300 houses are to be at once erected, at a cost of 200,000*l.*, the contract having been taken by Messrs. Curtis, of Stratford. It is also contemplated to erect a church at the same spot, and provide other institutions for the moral welfare of the inhabitants.

Defective Works: Fall of a Bridge.—On Friday week, a bridge over the Bishopstoke and Salisbury branch of the South Western Railway, at Timsbury, Wilts, fell in with a general crash, obstructing the way for a considerable space, and again delaying the frequently announced opening. By chance, the workmen were found, on calling over the roll, to have all escaped.

Our Obelisk.—We learn that in the course of the alterations now making in Alexandria, under a French engineer, the prostrate obelisk, known as Cleopatra's needle, which was presented to the English Government some time ago, has been buried in the sand, so that no trace of it remains.

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